Community Control Over the Police Now!

A Statement of Support for a Democratically-Elected Civilian Council with Full Control over the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police

This May, Pittsburgh voters rejected four more years of over-policing and gentrification under Mayor Peduto. They also again demonstrated the desire for police reform: referendums to ban no-knock warrants and limit solitary confinement passed overwhelmingly, after 78% of voters supported expanding the Citizens Police Review Board's powers to compel officers' cooperation with investigations in November. With the Black Lives Matter movement's powerful resurgence after the police murder of George Floyd, Pittsburgh continues to demonstrate that we want *more* accountability, transparency, democracy, and decisive action when it comes to ending police violence, reigning in wasteful spending, and reversing the deepening inequality forced upon working class and Black communities.

Enabled by Mayor Peduto's 50% increase of the police budget and 15% increase in officers, over-policing has failed to prevent the recent rise in crime, which reflects national trends in the shadow of the pandemic and economic recession. These crises cannot be solved by the police, which receive one fifth of the City budget, but by funding well-paid jobs, affordable social housing, public education and programming, universal healthcare, and social services, for which there is more than enough money. Meanwhile, from the United States' birth in slavery to Jim Crow segregation, redlining, poverty wages, and mass incarceration today, systemic racism has magnified the exploitation and oppression of the Black working class. This is seen in racial disparities when it comes to use of force and arrests, as well as the exodus of over 7000 Black people from Pittsburgh over the last decade. Furthermore, we cannot stand by as the youth stand up for racial justice and police accountability in the streets and instead face a militarized response.

For these reasons, **we support the independent, grassroots initiative to create a democratically-elected Civilian Police Control Council with full powers over the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, including to:**

- Hire, fire, investigate, subpoena, and discipline law enforcement officers;
- Set policing policy, rules, and regulations over the department;
- Review, approve, and reject budgets, private grants or donations, and any police-related purchases such as weapons, vehicles, technology, and new facilities;
- Collectively replace the Mayor as the bargaining representative on the City's behalf to negotiate and approve contracts with police unions.

Such a council—whose powers are outlined in a proposed Home Rule Charter Amendment based on several open, democratic conferences and months of community engagement—would be unprecedented in the United States. Establishment politicians and police have historically undercut and resisted grassroots attempts to achieve police accountability and transparency through independent review boards. Pittsburgh's Citizen Police Review Board was won through an important referendum organized by a working class grassroots campaign in 1997, following the police killing of Jonny Gammage; but the CPRB has not lived up to the vision and authority sought by the movement. Selected undemocratically by the Mayor and City Council, it has neither the power nor the resources to enforce recommendations regarding misconduct, enact broader policy, or set budgets. When it comes to holding officers accountable to residents, only 3% of complaints result in a public hearing. Pittsburgh's working class and Black residents deserve a Civilian Police Control Council that can empower our communities to openly discuss and direct decisions and priorities for public safety.

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To sign your organization, business, union, or office onto this statement in support of Community Control Over the Police, please fill out this form.

This statement of support has been signed by the following organizations, businesses, unions, and individuals, who are recognized as part of our growing coalition for Community Control Over the Police:

Alliance for Police Accountability (APA)
Jerry Dickinson, Candidate for Pennsylvania 18th Congressional District for U.S. Congress
Connor Mulvaney, Green Party Candidate for Pittsburgh District 4 City Council
Fossil Free Pitt Coalition
Green Party of Allegheny County
Jewish Voice for Peace Pittsburgh
New Afrikan Independence Party
No Cop Money PA
Penn Plaza Support and Action
Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance
Political Independents of Western PA
Socialist Alternative
Stop the Station
Randall Taylor, Former Pittsburgh Public Schools Board Member
University of Pittsburgh's Black Law Student Association

Businesses:
Black Cat Market
Nine O'Clock Wines
Rolling Pepperoni